

## Editorial Board Meetings: Storyline Points

### The Plan

- I said during my transition that the toughest part of my term was going to be the first two years – the problems Mississippi faced would take time to address.
- **I expected tough, contentious debates on key issues -- if fixing Mississippi was easy somebody would have already done it.**
- When you become the owner of an old house the first thing you do is fix the most urgent, fundamental needs first – foundation, plumbing, wiring. Once those are repaired you can begin remodeling. That's how we have approached Mississippi's problems.

### Repair Phase

- **During our repair phase we have addressed the budget, Medicaid and tort reform first.** Our budget was drowning in red ink, affecting everything we do; Medicaid was growing uncontrollably – even eating up education funding; and lawsuit abuse – both the reality

and the perception – was choking all our attempts at job creation.

- **We will look back at tort reform as one of the most effective job creation initiatives in Mississippi history.** Between doctors staying home, insurance rates holding steady, out-of-state companies putting Mississippi back on their lists and existing industries not being afraid to expand here, we are giving Mississippi an incredible job boost.
- **Somebody had to save Medicaid in Mississippi before it either went broke or ate the rest of Mississippi's budget.** Now we are going to be able to take care of the health care of Mississippi's poor and elderly and still have money available for their children, their schools, their roads and their safety.
- Mississippi is not alone in its struggles with Medicaid. **I am helping lead an NGA working group of Democrat and Republican governors who are recommending Medicaid reforms to Congress and the President.** These reforms will be good for Mississippi.

- **This latest budget, while not perfect, is the beginning of the end of the long budget crisis I inherited.** It's the best budget in six years.
- Mississippi's budget was like a broken down car, and some thought the solution was to just put more gas, or taxes, in it. **Believe me, gas is not our problem. Our budget has engine problems that are only now being addressed.**
- **The taxpayers were the heroes of this budget.** Tax revenues are coming into the state at one of the highest rates in history. We were proven right – tax hikes were not needed because the taxpayers are already doing their part.
- Despite all the budget rhetoric, most Mississippians are not going to notice drastic differences in state services this year.
- We heard a lot of rhetoric about “fully funding MAEP” – that equated to a 15% increase over this year. Superintendents said there would be larger class sizes and massive teacher firings if they didn't get 15%. They received 7% over this year – less than half of “full funding.” **Yet I read about superintendents across**

**the state saying nothing much is going to change in the schools. What is fact and what is fiction in our schools? We need an honest debate about education funding.**

- I am glad the Legislature agrees that the MAEP formula needs fixing and set a commission to study it. We cannot sustain the formula in its current form. The idea is a good one, but the formula is flawed. **I agree with MAEP equity, but not the MAEP equation.**

#### Remodel Phase

- Momentum Mississippi is designed to be our state's job creation plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This program is unlike any such program the state has ever had. **We need incentives that target machine jobs AND mainframe jobs - tool work AND technology work. We can have both for our citizens.**
- Momentum Mississippi is all about job creation and should not be weighed down with projects that have nothing to do with job creation.

- Some of the House bond projects may be good, but some may be “beef plants” waiting to happen. **I just want to make sure proper research is done and that professionals, and not politicians, are recommending projects.** A House member having an idea over breakfast and being friends with the Speaker should not be reasons enough to put taxpayers in debt.
- My message to citizens is simple: **Tell your Representative that jobs are at stake... don't slow down our Momentum with politics.**
- UpGrade is the most comprehensive education reform proposal in Mississippi since 1982. **It is more about fundamentals than funding and has the potential to transform our schools with classroom innovation.** I am looking forward to a statewide debate on the future of our schools in the near future.

### **Potential Questions:**

- Coast Drilling
- Killen Trial/national exposure
- Tuition Hikes
- HIV Medicaid recipients

- Medicaid changes July 1
- Recent job approval number
- Presidential aspirations
- Haley's PAC
- Municipal elections/relationships with new mayors
- Lack of teacher assistants
- Specifics on House bond projects
- Deteriorating relationship with the Speaker/House politics
- Lester Spell's switch and role in Beef Plant
- Partnership ruling/appeal